

## **US State Dept Daily Briefing 20040319 and March 19, 2004 'shooting' in Taiwan (Transcript)**

URL: <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2004/30616.htm>

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### **C-SPAN2 (20040319) State Dept Briefing - Mr. Erelí condemned the shooting of the president and vice president of Taiwan earlier that day (video clip)**

**MR. ERELÍ:** Good afternoon. Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the U.S. Government, the -- our strong condemnation of the act of violence in Taiwan yesterday, in which the President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian, and the Vice President, Lu, were shot.

We learned of that -- we learned of the shooting this morning, Friday, in Washington, and we are grateful to hear that neither President Chen nor Vice President Lu was seriously injured. Our thoughts are with their families and we extend our sincere wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

**Yes, sir**

**QUESTION:** Have you seen any indications that this was an -- an indeed, an attempt at their lives, or another kind of foul play?

**MR. ERELÍ:** The Taiwanese authorities are investigating, and I would refer you to them for any details. Clearly when anybody is shot at, the intention is ill and we are grateful that they escaped without serious injury, and we look forward to their speedy recovery.

**Yes, ma'am.**

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible), will U.S. have any contingency plan if there is a riot or, you know, violence after the election?

**MR. ERELÍ:** Our hope is for a free, fair and peaceful electoral process. That is what, I think, the Taiwanese people deserve. And we are looking forward to the full exercise of democracy in Taiwan.

**Yes, ma'am.**

**QUESTION:** Do you think this will have any impact on Taiwan's democratization, especially when this tragedy happened before the referendum day -- election day?

**MR. ERELÍ:** Again, I would say, we are hoping for free, fair and peaceful elections, and I don't think it's appropriate to speculate.

I think we will deal with the facts, and the facts are that the president and the vice president are recovering and the elections are tomorrow.

**QUESTION:** A follow-up. Legislators say that the AET people tried to see President Chen, but was not allowed to see. Can you confirm that?

**MR. ERELI:** No. What I can tell you is that the American Embassy of Taiwan has been in close contact with Taiwanese authorities concerning the shooting incident and that Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Jim Kelly has contacted the head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office to express our condolences.

**QUESTION:** Anybody else called -- tried to call C J Chen, our representative?

**MR. ERELI:** That's what I -- those are the calls that I have to share with you.

**QUESTION:** Okay, thank you.


**QUESTION:** Are you requesting any further meetings with authorities or maybe President Chen, himself?

**MR. ERELI:** Not that I'm aware of.

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## Daily Press Briefing

**Adam Ereli, Deputy Spokesman**

Washington, DC

March 19, 2004

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**TRANSCRIPT:**

1:15 p.m. EST

MR. ERELI: Good afternoon. Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the U.S. Government, the -- our strong condemnation of the act of violence in Taiwan yesterday, in which the President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian, and the Vice President, Lu, were shot.

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QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

QUESTION: Are you requesting any further meetings with authorities or maybe President Chen, himself?

MR. ERELI: Not that I'm aware of.

Sir.

QUESTION: Yes. Adam, there are two pictures from Baghdad, actually, some journalists, international and Arab, walked out on Secretary Powell in protest of our two colleagues are being died in Iraq, this is number one.

Number two, regarding the incidents that's happened in Iraq, and I know that you gave an interview exclusive yesterday to us, the car was like being shot from behind, and our correspondent there has an unborn baby. How do you evaluate these two incidents that journalists walked out on the Secretary Powell, and then the stories that would be told for that baby child, you know, when he born, about his father?

MR. ERELI: Let me say a couple of things on this tragic incident.

First of all, we regret the deaths of these two journalists, as we regret the deaths of all innocents that have fallen in Iraq. It was -- we are looking, again, investigating into the details of the incident to

determine exactly what happened and why, but it's clear that it was not deliberate. It was an accident, a tragic accident that we very much regret.

I think it's important to note that Iraq is and remains a dangerous place. The work of journalists there is dangerous. The work of civilians trying to help the Iraqi people are dangerous, and every day -- or not every day, but we have, I guess, regular reminders of the sacrifices that people -- Iraqi, foreign, journalists, civilian -- are making on behalf of a good cause, the cause of freedom and justice and truth, which is what the journalists are trying to do.

As far as the incident -- or the press conference with Secretary Powell, I think Secretary Powell said it very well.

We respect the rights of people to express their opinion -- even, and I suppose especially when they're different from our own, because that -- nothing, I think, bears greater testimony and speaks more eloquently to the values that we are trying to promote in Iraq and trying to help the Iraqi people embrace and develop than the ability to dissent peacefully, openly, in full respect of each other's differing views. And I think what we saw in Iraq today was in marked contrast to what we were looking -- seeing in Iraq a little over a year ago, with the stage-managed and controlled showpieces by Iraq's Baathist Minister of Information.

QUESTION: On the investigation, how long do you think it will be before the investigation is over? And will you release a report of the investigation?

MR. ERELI: I'd refer you to the Department of Defense on that.  
Nadia.

QUESTION: Related to Iraq, (inaudible) confusion about this statement from the Polish Prime Minister, saying that the -- they were deceived because there was no weapons of mass destruction. And then he said, no, in fact, it's not what he said, but he said something else. So have you been in contact with the Polish Government or its Foreign Minister to clear this?

MR. ERELI: I would first refer you to the statement that the Chancellery of the Polish President put out today clarifying the remarks that were reported in the President's interview yesterday in which, I think, the President stated or the Office of the President stated very clearly that he was misled by Saddam Hussein about the weapons of mass destruction, number one; and, number two, that Poland was committed to standing side by side with the United States and the other 30-plus members of the coalition to see that Iraq is free and that our joint exit strategy is a strategy of success. We will leave when the job's done and when the job is finished.

I would also point out to you that President Bush and President Kwasniewski had a very positive phone conversation today. White House Spokesman Scott McClellan spoke to it, I think, rather extensively earlier today. And in that conversation, again, President Kwasniewski strongly reaffirmed Poland's continued commitment to stabilizing Iraq and reiterated Poland's commitment to keeping its military forces in Iraq until the successful conclusion of the mission.

QUESTION: I know you don't like to comment on statement that comes daily, but the -- also the French Foreign Minister said today that Iraq, in fact, or -- terrorism did not exist in Iraq before American invaded and the world is not safer.

Again, I mean is this something that we should consider with relationship between France and America concerning the war in Iraq, and generally on terrorism?

MR. ERELI: You know, we've been dealing with this question for quite some time and my answer today remains the same -- that the United States is looking forward, not backward. Our focus is on helping Iraq to build a safer, more democratic, more prosperous country, and working with the international community toward that end. I think what you see today is a mighty coalition of likeminded states committed to the shared goal of building a stable democracy in this strategically vital part of the world.

The fact of the matter is terrorism existed before the action in Iraq. Iraq had links to terrorism. There were terrorist organizations operating in Iraq. And I think terrorism will, unfortunately, be with us even as we stabilize Iraq. So -- the use of terror is, unfortunately, I think, a function of our modern world. And to

try to say that it was existent in one part and not existent in another part, I think, ignores the fluidity and the -- the fluidity of the phenomenon.

QUESTION: When you talking about terrorist organization, you are referring to al-Qaida in Iraq?

MR. ERELI: Ansar Al-Islam. But I think -- if you look at what the Secretary's presentation on February 5th -- he presented evidence of terrorist groups, including Ansar Al-Islam and Zarkawi efforts to develop -- or, activities there and efforts to develop or have contacts with chemical agents to conduct their activities. And the final point I would make on this is the point that I think President Bush makes very forcefully, and that is that given the attacks of September 11th, given the capabilities of Saddam Hussein, given the aggressive intent of Saddam Hussein, given Saddam Hussein's association with terrorists in the past, that it was the right and responsible thing to do to take decisive action to protect the American people. And that is something that we -- a decision that we do not question, that we do not doubt, and that we are confident was the right thing to do.

Teri.

QUESTION: This may have happened too close to briefing time. But are you aware of a round of blasts in central Baghdad? It was just before the briefing. It was near the headquarters of the CPA. Can you comment on that?

MR. ERELI: No, I did not hear of it, so I can't speak to it.

QUESTION: Another issue like that. What about a tape said to be from the Taliban saying that they are going to attack the U.S. in Pakistan again if they continue closing in on them?

MR. ERELI: I haven't seen the tape, but the Taliban are in our sights and will not find any relief from our efforts and those of our allies in the global war of terror to see that they cannot perpetrate the kind of depredations that they were allowed to do when in power.

In the back.

QUESTION: Different subject also.

MR. ERELI: Are we finished with terrorism?

QUESTION: Back to Iraq. Apparently, South Korea is holding off on their troop deployments. Is that because of the -- that they were meant to go to Kirkuk, where offensive operations are going to take place? Or is that more just a political decision?

MR. ERELI: This is a logistical issue. We are discussing with the Government of South Korea the details of its upcoming deployment to Iraq. These discussions are focused on determining what is the best location, given the Korean troops' capabilities for the reconstruction and stabilization mission.

Yes, Kosovo.

QUESTION: Deputy Secretary Armitage met this morning with the Serbian-Montenegro Foreign Minister Svilanovich. Could you tell us a little bit more about the meeting?

MR. ERELI: Before going to sort of the details of the meeting between Deputy Secretary Armitage and Serbian Foreign Minister Svilanovich, let's look at the big picture.

In Kosovo, the situation has calmed somewhat, although I would say it remains tense. Some disturbances occurred the night, last night in Kosovo. A Serbian church -- a Serbian Orthodox Church was burned, and homes of the Ashkali minority were burned and looted.

We reiterate our call on all involved, but particularly the ethnic Albanian community in Kosovo, to stop the violence immediately. We are working with key figures in the region and international allies to end the violence and restore calm.

I would note that NATO is reinforcing its presence in Kosovo with four companies from SFOR and lead elements of a UK battalion and a French battalion arriving today. And we expect that Italian and German battalions will deploy in the next coming days, as well as a Romanian company that is on notice to move into Kosovo. The point here is that KFOR is taking strong action to restore stability and protect all the residents of Kosovo.

As you mentioned, Deputy Secretary Armitage and the Foreign Minister of Serbia-Montenegro had a meeting today at the State Department. They discussed the situation in Kosovo. They both stated that the immediate priority in Kosovo is to end the violence that has occurred in recent days. They also agreed that UNMIK, KFOR must act decisively to protect persons and property from further violence.

They reviewed the recent KFOR actions that I just described, and they concurred that no party in Kosovo can be allowed to profit or advance a political agenda through violent measures.

Deputy Secretary Armitage also praised the quick action of Belgrade authorities in quelling the violence against Muslim religious sites and properties in Serbia, and we thanked the Serbian Government for strengthening measures to protect diplomatic missions and minority cultural sites.

In addition to what KFOR is doing, the KFOR movements and the meeting between Deputy Secretary Armitage and Serbian Foreign Minister Svilanovic, I would note that Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman called the UN Special Representative Holkeri and Kosovo's Prime Minister Rexhepi this morning to express support for Holkeri's effort. We also urged the Prime Minister to continue the effort he is making to stop the violence and restore calm.

Under Secretary Grossman also spoke by phone today with Serbian President Kostunica. The contact group, which consists of the U.S., UK, Germany, France, Italy, Russia and the European Commission will meet in Brussels on March 23rd, at our request, to discuss a course of action and political directions of the Quintet. The Quintet had phone consultations today.

In Belgrade, our chargé met with President Kostunica and Defense Ministers Tadic to encourage them to continue their measured response. And in Pristina, our Chief of Diplomatic Mission Marcy Ries continues to meet regularly with the UN Special Representative and leaders of the Provisional Institutions of Self Government urging them to use their considerable power and influence to get the violence to stop.

Basically, we're on this. We're promoting a dialogue in reconciliation, and we think it's important that all sides end the violence and talk to each other.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: You're talking about all sides in the conflict. That's the way the conflict has been portrayed in the international public, as ethnic conflict. Independent reports show that Serbs are actually -- the Serb minorities -- being attacked by Albanians, expelled, their churches burned.

Is it going to be acknowledged that -- especially the right of Serbian minority should be protected in Kosovo?

MR. ERELI: I think the right of all minorities is something that we recognize, and I think that all parties have a responsibility to end violence as a means for settling political disputes.

Yes.

QUESTION: There have been reports of Serbian troop movements in southern Serbia and Presevo Valley; that they're coming up to the border. I believe that the U.S. KFOR have troops on the other side. Have you heard about these troop movements? Is there a potential for clashes there if they feel tempted to actually move across the border?

MR. ERELI: I haven't heard about those specific reports. I would simply note that, as I said before, we are coordinating closely with the Government of Serbia.

Deputy Secretary Armitage is meeting today, I think, was in agreement that Serbia has acted so far to quell violence and to practice restraint.

I would also note that the Commander in Chief of NATO Allied Forces South, Admiral Gregory Johnson, concluded -- today concluded a visit to Pristina, where he'd been for several days. There, he talked to local KFOR commanders, Kosovo leaders, both Albanian and Serb, as well as international diplomatic representatives to assess the security situation and help bring about a restoration of order.

He also met today with the Defense Minister of Serbia and Montenegro and the Chief of Serbia and Montenegro general staff.

Same subject?

QUESTION: Yeah, same subject.

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: In the meeting with the Deputy Secretary, did they discuss any further action in the UN and Security Council? Was there any pressure from the Serbs to have certain wording?

MR. ERELI: I'm not aware that that came up.

As you probably know, the UN Security Council met yesterday in open session to discuss this crisis. Our Deputy Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Cunningham, expressed the strong U.S.

condemnation of the violence. And the president of the Security Council issued a statement in the name of all Security Council members condemning the violence and stating the imperative that the population in Kosovo expresses their grievances by democratic means and through recognizing legitimate channels. Same subject?

Yes.

QUESTION: In Belgrade today, Defense Minister Tadic said that he -- Serbia retained the right to reexamine its policy if the violence against Serbs continued. Was this discussed in any way, a possible Serb troop deployment or military action?

MR. ERELI: Our focus is on ending the violence. We think that there shouldn't be the need for further escalation because the important thing is to get the violence under control. And that's what we're working toward.

QUESTION: But was the possibility of a Serbian involvement discussed?

MR. ERELI: With Deputy Secretary Armitage?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR. ERELI: Not that I'm aware.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Is there a -- is the State Department addressing any kind of, or seeing any kind of humanitarian need? Is USAID gearing up with anything?

MR. ERELI: We have ongoing programs of assistance in Kosovo that I think address the needs that you mentioned. This crisis doesn't have to do with, I think, humanitarian assistance; it has to do with political violence and needs a political solution.

QUESTION: You don't see any displacement of peoples or anything because of the violence?

MR. ERELI: No.

QUESTION: Do you still have a U.S. Ambassador in Serbia, or a U.S. representative?

MR. ERELI: I'll have to check on what the status of the Ambassador is -- our Chargé.

QUESTION: So, who's minding -- he's minding the store?

MR. ERELI: Yes. We'll get you the latest on that.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. ERELI: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Change of subject?

MR. ERELI: Okay.

QUESTION: After the quite a while, the United States and Belarus are holding talks again. Ambassador Pifer is in Minsk right now. I just wanted to know if we should expect something big and significant from this visit or is it just regular working visit? What's the main mission of his visit there?

MR. ERELI: Ambassador or Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Steve Pifer is in Belarus as part of a joint U.S.-EU mission. This is a joint mission that is designed to underscore the importance that the United States and the European Union attach to their relations with Belarus and to express the view that we wish to see Belarus end its current self isolation and claim its rightful place among free and democratic Europe without dividing lines.

I think -- they will be putting out a statement shortly on their visit that goes into fuller detail: What the issues were that were discussed -- what were the issues discussed and what were the outcomes of the mission.

Yes.

QUESTION: But did they threaten sanctions against Belarus if its human rights record doesn't improve?

MR. ERELI: I don't have anything on that for you. I'd wait until they put their statement out.

Yes, John.

QUESTION: New subject?

MR. ERELI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Can I ask you about the Syria Accountability Act? Any update, firstly, on when any new measures might be announced?



And also, could you just remind us why this is going to be in the United States' interest, rather than just harming its relations with the Arab world?

MR. ERELI: Well, I would first refer you to the act itself, which is an act of Congress that requires the Administration, absent certain Syrian actions, to impose sanctions on Syria and provides a menu, or a choice of sanctions to choose from.

So this is -- we are acting on, appropriately, and responding to the will of Congress and the will of the American people on this issue. That's point number one.

Point number two: I think, it's important to keep the focus where it rightly should be, which is on the actions or, if you will, inactions of the Government of Syria, which continues to support terrorist organizations that work against the interest of peace and in the end, the interests of those who want to see peace return to this troubled region.

Point number three: On timing, as we've consistently said, this is a decision that we expect to make in a timely way, consistent with the legislation, but I don't have any sort of details or predictions for you of when that will take place.

QUESTION: I'm sure you've heard the criticism recently that any new sanctions on Syria would just further isolate the country, turn it against the West, not helping the furtherance of your goals.

MR. ERELI: That is a subject of political debate, which I'm really not going to get into. I think that for us, the important point here is that Congress has passed legislation and we are committed to implementing it.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. ERELI: One more question in the back.

QUESTION: Yes, sir. Different subject, though, on Sudan. West of Sudan, hundred of people being forced every day out of their villages by government militia -- Arabs that are trying to kill them -- Arab -- a hundred of them being killed every day. Don't you think this need a quick action from the international community?

MR. ERELI: We have been actively involved in this. This is the situation in Darfur that you refer you.

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. ERELI: Darfur -- which is a -- we have, I think, spoken out publicly and quite strongly against the ongoing violence in Darfur. We have called on the government to restrain militias and to stop the fighting. We have been working actively to open humanitarian corridors and get humanitarian aid there to the hundreds of thousands of victims of this senseless and needless fighting. And we continue to be very actively engaged with the Government of Sudan to put an end to this suffering.

QUESTION: But Adam, it increased and not decreased, though.

MR. ERELI: I think that we've seen progress in terms of getting humanitarian supplies in there. It is clear that the militias need to be more actively controlled and I think it's going to require a concerted effort. It has gone on far too long, but we are not going to stop our efforts to bring it under control.

QUESTION: But is the U.S. still cooperating, helping Sudan get a peace deal while it's doing this (inaudible)?

MR. ERELI: Yes, we are, you know, these are, I would say, distinct conflicts, but clearly, it's important, I think, to work actively to try to end both.

As far as the talks in Naivasha go, to end the civil war in Sudan between the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and the government, I think Assistant Secretary of State Charlie Snyder is there. Our Director of USAID is there. Senator John Danforth is there. We are, I think, actively engaged with the parties to try to bring about an agreement. As you all know, there's sort of one major sticking point left, and we're going to be actively involved in trying to get them to bridge their differences on that issue.

QUESTION: And absent a solution in Darfur, you'd still welcome a peace deal between the government and SPLA?

MR. ERELI: Yeah, absolutely.

QUESTION: But this is the government that's sanctioning the killings.

MR. ERELI: This -- as I said, these are distinct conflicts that both need to be resolved, and resolving one -- efforts at one should not come at the expense -- need not come at the expense of the other.

QUESTION: But contrary to what happened last year, there was a deadline. They were supposed to broker a deal by the end of the year, and they're going to sign an agreement. Now it seems like they didn't take their time whenever can't solve this last sticking point. I mean, are you putting enough pressure on them to reach a deadline and an agreement on --

MR. ERELI: There's an important clarification here. When the Secretary met with the two parties in Kenya in -- I guess it was November, or maybe it was October -- when he went last year -- maybe it was October. It was the parties who said, "We can -- we believe we can reach an agreement by December." It wasn't a deadline that the United States imposed. It was a date that the parties themselves set for themselves and said that they thought they could reach.

So the end of the year came and went; they didn't reach the agreement. It's proving a little bit more difficult, I think, than they expected.

We have not in any way, I think, relented or eased up in the intensity of our efforts to help them reach agreement, and -- as is demonstrated, really, by the near constant presence and near constant communication with the parties as they conduct their negotiations. But it's not a question of the U.S. imposing a deadline. It's a question of the parties understanding what they can accomplish together and us being there to help them get along.

QUESTION: So you think as long as they reach an agreement by November 4th that will be okay?

MR. ERELI: I think we want to see an agreement as soon as possible.

Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:50 p.m.)

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